

## **Abstract**

**RESEARCH PAPER:** An Autoethnographic Study on the Filipina-American Graduate Student Surviving and Thriving at a Predominantly White Institution

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**DATE:** May 2021

**PAGES:** 79

Filipino-Americans are the second fastest growing Asian and Pacific Islander community in the United States, yet they continue to be underrepresented throughout U.S. institutions (de Jesús, 2005). As one the second largest Asian American populations in higher education, very little research has been done on Filipino American graduate students, especially at predominantly white institutions. The purpose of this autoethnographic qualitative study is to understand the lived experiences of a Filipina American graduate student who decided to move from California to pursue their Master's in Student Affairs Administration in Higher Education at a predominantly white institution. This study seeks to explore the traumatizing experiences of an aspiring professional woman of color in white-centered spaces, and the healing from the trauma through mentorship of professionals of color and community from colleagues of color. The literature provides context that inform experiences of Asian American women fetishized and traumatized in white-centered spaces in higher education, and how graduate students of color persevere through mentorship of professionals of color and friendship of colleagues of color. Five prompts were utilized in extracting descriptive experiences of the subject's personal graduate school experience, and the journal entries were used as data to analyze the subject's experience in connection to larger systemic issues that cause trauma, and how people with

similar experiences find safe spaces among one another. Based on these findings, student affairs professionals are encouraged to seek structural change, institutional support, create formal and informal community spaces, and offer peer and faculty mentoring opportunities.

Keywords: Filipina-American, graduate student of color, predominantly white institution, trauma, mentorship, community, healing